

LENIN ON IRELAND

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INTRODUCTION

Discussion on what came to be known as the "national question" has always been sharp in the Socialist movement and has marked a dividing line not only between Left and Right but between Left and Ultra-Left.

As Britain's first colony Ireland was the first country to develop a national movement for freedom. Ireland and its struggle were studied in detail by Marx and Engels. Engels started on a history of Ireland which was never completed.

Their study of the Irish question was made from the viewpoint of the struggle of the English working-class. They came to the conclusion that the English workers could never win freedom until the Irish people had done so.

"A nation which oppresses another cannot itself be free".

They posed the question of national freedom in an international way. It was not only in the interests of the oppressed nation but also in the interests of the people of the oppressor nation that the exploitation of one nation by another should be ended. The fact that they reached their conclusions on a scientific basis does not in any way mean that they did not feel enthusiasm and emotion in their support for the Irish people's struggle. One has only to read their letters to see how deeply they responded to Ireland's fight. In the campaign against the brutal treatment of the Fenian prisoners the International Workingmen's Association played a leading part. Marx's daughter wrote a series of articles in a French paper which exposed the conditions under which O'Donovan Rossa and others were being held.

There is a letter from released Fenian prisoners who had arrived in the U.S. reproduced in Vol. 1. of "Devoy's Post Bag" (C. J. Fallon Ltd., Dublin, 1948), which ends:

"(We) hope we shall ever continue as we have begun, meriting by our actions the co-operation and support of the great International Workingmen's Association and of all lovers of Freedom by whatever name they may be known".

The national question had become a burning one at the beginning of this century not only in relation to Ireland but also in relation to the nations which were held in subservience by

Russia. Some Socialists dismissed national aspirations for freedom as simply a diversion from the real struggle. The same fight which Lenin carried on against this viewpoint was also fought by James Connolly. His famous controversy with William Walker, of Belfast, and his analysis of what imperialism really was in "Labour in Irish History" and the "Reconquest of Ireland" show his ideas running parallel with those of Lenin.

Lenin in his pamphlet "On the Right of Nations to Self-Determination" answered those who wrote off the national rights of peoples and put forward the principles upon which he considered a really revolutionary Socialist policy should be based.

His main conclusions were :

1. Self-determination means the right of nations to separation from alien national bodies and the right to form independent national states.

2. The working-class and its party must defend the right of all nations to self-determination.

3. The working-class, at the same time, must fight against all attempts to create hostility between the peoples of different nations.

4. International unity and solidarity between the working-class of all nations.

This was the theoretical basis for a revolutionary standpoint.

In his pamphlet "The National Pride of the Great Russians" he took up the question of what the attitude of an internationalist and a Marxist should be to the culture and the people of his own country. In answer to those who accused Marxists of being anti-patriotic Lenin wrote :—

"Is the sense of national pride alien to us, Great Russian, class-conscious proletarians? Of course not! We love our language and our country, we are doing more than anybody to raise **her** toiling masses to the level of the conscious life of democrats and Socialists . . .

"We are filled with a sense of national pride and for that very reason we particularly hate our slavish past, (when the noble landlords led the muzhiks to war in order to crush the freedom of Hungary, Poland, Persia and China) and our slavish present when these same landlords, backed by the capitalists, are leading us to war in order to throttle Poland and the Ukraine in order to crush the democratic movement in Persia and in China".

Lenin approached all problems from the viewpoint of a revolutionary Marxist, whose ultimate aim was the establishment of a Socialist society but he saw that the fight for Social-

ism would take place in stages. Unlike the Ultra-Lefts he did not mistake his own revolutionary desires for reality, "the most dangerous mistake a revolutionary can make," he called that particular aberration.

All revolutionary movements contain a proportion of romantics, people who think that because they wish a thing to be so it is so. Lenin's strength lay not only in his intellectual power and iron determination but in his capacity to see reality as it actually was, to analyze it and then decide what was the next step forward. He did not write off progressive developments which could be won even under capitalism. As he wrote in "Left-Wing Communism," "a bourgeois republic with constituent assembly is better than one without a constituent assembly, but a workers' and peasants' republic is better than any bourgeois democratic, parliamentary republic."

Democracy and national independence are both steps on the road to Socialism.

Lenin's attitude to the 1916 rising as revealed in this pamphlet is in sharp contrast to that, for instance, of the romantic Leon Trotsky whose great powers only became effective when his dreams and reality happened to coincide, as they did in 1917. Trotsky wrote about 1916 :

"So far as purely military operations against the rebels were concerned, the Government emerged as master of the situation with comparative ease. An All-Ireland movement such as the nationalist dreamers had expected simply failed to materialise. The Irish countryside did not stir. The Irish bourgeoisie, and likewise the higher and more influential stratum of the Irish intelligentsia, held aloof. There fought and died only the workers of Dublin, together with some revolutionary enthusiasts from the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia. **The basis for a national revolution has disappeared even in backward Ireland . . .** The young Irish working class, coming into existence as it did in an atmosphere saturated with the heroic traditions of national revolt and clashing with the egotistically limited and imperially arrogant trade unionism of Britain has naturally wavered between syndicalism and nationalism, and is always ready to link these two conceptions together in its revolutionary consciousness. It has attracted to itself the younger intelligentsia and **some nationalist enthusiasts, who in their turn have ensured the preponderance, in the working-class movement, of the Green flag over the red.** Thus the "national revolution" in Ireland too has **amounted, in practice, to a revolt of the workers,** and Casement's clearly isolated position in the movement merely emphasises this fact more sharply . . . The experiment of an Irish national

rebellion, in which Casement, with undoubted personal courage represented obsolete hopes and out-dated methods, is over. But the historical role of the Irish proletariat is only beginning. Already it has brought into this revolt, **even though under an archaic flag**, its class indignation against militarism and imperialism. This indignation will not now subside".

("Nashe Slovo", 4th July, 1916.)

This amounts to writing off the real forces which were acting in a revolutionary manner and substituting for them an ideal movement which did not yet exist. Most Ultra-Left movements to this day think in this way which is the reason why in spite of great enthusiasm and sincerity, they always end in disillusion and defeat.

Lenin's view on the national question was that it was a reality growing out of the development of capitalist society. He did not advocate the setting up of small independent states for its own sake. In relation to Russia he wanted it to remain as one state but on the basis of a **voluntary** union. Here we come to the core of his idea. While he was in favour of big states and against national exclusiveness he was against all forms of compulsion in relations between one nation and another. If there was federation or amalgamation it must be on a voluntary basis.

"Inseparably connected with the principle of complete equality, is the guaranteeing of the rights of national minorities".

He extended this conception to include not only nation states but national minorities within states and their right to the use of their own language. Language is one of the essentials of nationhood. To those who ridiculed the idea that national minorities should use and be educated through their own language. Lenin replied with the example of Switzerland where laws submitted to a referendum were not only printed in the 3 state languages but also in 2 "Latin" dialects. Here the national question had been solved on the basis of democracy.

By this example he refuted the pseudo-internationalist argument which wanted all national differences wiped out as a prerequisite for progress. He showed that this seemingly ultra-revolutionary argument in fact played into the hands of the imperialists.

In "Left-Wing Communism" Lenin deals with the question of whether "national and State differences" will disappear when Socialism has been achieved on a world scale. He answered:

"These differences will continue to exist for a very long time even after the dictatorship of the proletariat has been established on a world scale."

Under Socialism, too, the question of the relationship be-

tween nations can only be solved on the basis of equality and the right to self-determination. The application of this principle in the Soviet Union led to a tremendous development of languages and national cultures.

Some might think that ideas put forward over 50 years ago are not relevant to the situation to-day. Yet it is essential sometimes to go back to basic principles.

The greatest weakness in the Irish Labour movement's conception of Socialism has always been its failure to recognise how the struggle for Socialism contains within itself all kinds of other struggles. "Pure" Socialism's exponents may be worthy of admiration but they won't cause the exploiters to lose any sleep. The most Right-Wing figures in the Labour movement have always paid tribute to an abstract "Socialism". That kind couldn't do any harm.

It was when national movements all over the world grasped the economic basis of imperialism that they became effective. Those countries which have not pursued the economic fight against imperialism after political independence was gained are rapidly coming under the heel of imperialism again, but this time in a concealed form.

Imperialism to-day can take over a country and its agent will not be a soldier with a gun but a nicely-dressed, soft-spoken young man with a computer.

Against this new type of imperialism it is much harder to fight than against the old, since it can appear in the guise of "prosperity" and "economic development."

The struggle against this form of domination may break out in all kinds of peculiar places. It is the task of those who are seriously fighting for progress to recognise and assist every movement against imperialism, no matter what class or section are waging it and no matter what the issue may be.

The new situation which has developed in Ireland over the past decade has seen the growth of a movement, as yet fragmented and in many cases with unclear aims and methods, which has adopted "Socialism" as its objective. The main danger to this movement is exclusiveness and a narrowness which, by failing to understand reality, fails to see the forces which can bring about change.

This pamphlet brings together the writings of a great revolutionary on Ireland. Because he had fully grasped the scientific Socialist method he was able to see the forces for progress in a land many hundreds of miles away at a time when a considerable number in the Labour movement in Ireland itself couldn't recognise them.

CLASS WAR IN DUBLIN

James Connolly wrote that he didn't want anyone to imitate Wolfe Tone, because Tone's greatness lay in the fact that he imitated nobody. We must learn from, not imitate, the great figures of the past. The method, the approach, in these writings is the important thing from a revolutionary viewpoint.

Apart from that, of course, they have a tremendous historical interest. They are living internationalism, responding to the struggle of the people for freedom in all countries.

Not least they show one of the clearest minds which ever worked in the Labour movement in action.

A. RAFTERY

Dublin : January, 1970.

(The writings of V. I. Lenin on Ireland included in this booklet are contained in the book "V. I. Lenin on Britain," published by Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, and simultaneously, in 1960, in Great Britain by Lawrence & Wishart, Ltd. We have added two footnotes, on page 8 to indicate that the late Jim Larkin was not a grandson of the Manchester Martyr, Michael Larkin; and on page 9 to give more detail about "the delegate Partridge," referred to by Lenin.)

In Dublin, the capital of Ireland—a city of not a highly industrial type, with a population of half a million—the class struggle, which permeates the whole life of capitalist society everywhere, has become accentuated to the point of class war. The police have positively gone wild; drunken policemen assault peaceful workers, break into houses, torment the aged, women and children. Hundreds of workers (over 400) have been injured and **two killed**—such are the casualties of this war. All prominent leaders of the workers have been arrested. People are thrown into prison for making the most peaceful speeches. The city is like an armed camp.

What is the matter? How could such a war flare up in a peaceable, cultured, civilised free state?

Ireland is something of a British Poland, only rather more of the Galician type than of the Warsaw-Lodz-Dombrowski variety.* National oppression and Catholic reaction have turned the proletarians of this unhappy country into paupers, the peasants into toilworn, ignorant and dull slaves of the priesthood, and the bourgeoisie into a phalanx, masked by nationalist phrases, of capitalists, of despots over the workers; finally, they have turned the authorities into a gang accustomed to every kind of violence.

At the present moment the Irish nationalists (i.e. the Irish bourgeoisie) are the victors. They are buying up the land from the British landlords; they are getting national **Home Rule** (the famous Home Rule for which such a long and stubborn struggle between Ireland and Britain has gone on); they will freely govern "their" land in conjunction with "their" Irish priests.

Well, this Irish nationalist bourgeoisie is celebrating its "national" victory, its maturity in "affairs of the state" by declaring a war to the death against the Irish labour movement.

In Dublin lives the British Lord-Lieutenant. But in actual fact his power yields to that of the Dublin capitalist leader, a certain Murphy, publisher of the **Independent** (seriously—"Independent!"), the principal shareholder and director of the Dublin tramways, and a shareholder in a whole number of capitalist establishments in Dublin. Murphy has declared, on behalf of all the Irish capitalists, of course, that he is ready to spend three-quarters of a million pounds to destroy the Irish trade unions.

* That is, rather more clerical-agrarian than industrial.—Ed.

And these unions have begun to develop splendidly. On the heels of the Irish bourgeois scoundrels engaged in celebrating their "national" victory followed the Irish proletariat, awakening to class consciousness. It has found a talented leader in the person of Comrade **Larkin**, secretary of the Irish Transport Workers' Union. Possessing remarkable oratorical talent, a man of seething Irish energy, Larkin has performed miracles among the unskilled workers—that mass of the British proletariat which in Britain is so often cut off from the advanced workers by that cursed petty-bourgeois, Liberal, aristocratic spirit of the British skilled worker.

A new spirit has been aroused in the Irish workers' unions. The unskilled workers have introduced unparalleled animation into the trade unions. Even the women have begun to organize—a thing hitherto unknown in Catholic Ireland. Dublin showed promise of becoming one of the foremost towns in the whole of Great Britain so far as organization of the workers is concerned. The country that used to be typified by the fat, well-fed Catholic priest and the poor, starving, ragged worker, in tatters even on Sunday because he is without the wherewithal to purchase Sunday clothes—this country, bearing a double and triple, national, yoke, was beginning to turn into a land with an organized army of the proletariat.

Murphy proclaimed a crusade of the bourgeoisie against Larkin and "Larkinism." To begin with, 200 tramwaymen were dismissed in order to provoke a strike during the exhibition and to **embitter** the whole struggle. The Transport Workers' Union went on strike and demanded the re-instatement of the discharged men. Murphy engineered lock-outs. The workers retaliated by downing tools. War raged all along the line. Passions flared up.

Larkin—incidentally, he is a grandson of the famous Larkin executed in 1867 for participating in the Irish liberation movement*—delivered fiery speeches at meetings. In these speeches he pointed out that the party of the British bourgeois enemies of Irish Home Rule is openly calling for resistance to the government, is threatening revolution, is organizing armed resistance to Home Rule and with absolute impunity is flooding the country with revolutionary appeals.

But what the reactionaries, the **British** jingoes Carson, Londonderry and Bonar Law may do (the British Purishkeviches, the nationalists who are in full cry against Ireland), the proletarian Socialist may not. Larkin was arrested. A meeting called by the workers was banned.

* Lenin was wrongly informed on this point.

Ireland, however, is not Russia. The attempt to suppress the right of assembly evoked a storm of indignation. Larkin **had to be tried**. At the trial Larkin became the accuser and actually put Murphy in the dock. By cross-questioning witnesses Larkin proved that Murphy had had long conversations with the Lord-Lieutenant on the eve of his, Larkin's, arrest. Larkin declared the police to be in Murphy's pay, and no one dared gainsay him.

Larkin was released on bail (political liberty cannot be abolished at one stroke). Larkin declared that he would be at the meeting no matter what happened. And indeed, he came to the meeting disguised, and began to speak to the crowd. The police recognised him, seized him and beat him. For two days the dictatorship of the police truncheon raged, crowds were clubbed, women and children tormented. The police broke into workers' homes. A worker named **Nolan**, a member of the Transport Workers' Union, was beaten to death. Another died from injuries.

On Thursday, September 4 (August 22, old style), Nolan's funeral took place. The proletariat of Dublin followed in a procession 50,000 strong behind the body of their comrade. The police brutes lay low, not daring to irritate the crowd, and exemplary order prevailed. "This is a more magnificent demonstration than when they buried Parnell" (the celebrated Irish nationalist leader), said an old Irishman to a German correspondent.

The Dublin events mark a turning point in the history of the labour movement and of socialism in Ireland. Murphy threatened to destroy the Irish trade unions. He only succeeded in destroying the last remnants of the influence of the nationalist Irish bourgeoisie over the proletariat in Ireland. He has helped to steel the working-class movement in Ireland, to make it independent, free of nationalist prejudices, and revolutionary.

This was seen immediately at the (British) Trades Union Congress which opened on September 1 in Manchester. The Dublin events inflamed the delegates—despite the resistance of the opportunist trade-union leaders with their petty-bourgeois spirit and their admiration for the bosses. A Dublin workers' delegation was given an ovation. Delegate Partridge,* chairman of the Dublin branch of the Engineers' Union, spoke about the abominable outrages committed by the police in

*William P. Partridge, was an outstanding pioneer of the Labour and trade union movement, being actively involved in the 1913 lock-out. In the 1916 uprising he fought in the College of Surgeons with the Irish Citizen Army. He died in 1918.

Dublin. A young working girl had just gone to bed when the police raided her house. The girl hid in the closet, but was dragged out by the hair. The police were drunk. These "men" (if one may call them such) beat up ten-year-old lads and five-year-old children!

Partridge was twice arrested for making speeches which the judge himself admitted were peaceful. I am sure, said Partridge, that I will now be arrested if I publicly recite the Lord's Prayer.

The Manchester Congress sent a delegation to Dublin. The bourgeoisie there again took up the weapon of nationalism (just like the bourgeois nationalists in Poland or in the Ukraine, or among the Jews!) declaring that "Englishmen have no business on Irish soil!" But **fortunately**, the Nationalists have already lost their influence over their workers.*

At the Manchester Congress speeches were delivered of a kind that had not been heard for a long time. A resolution was moved to transfer the whole Congress to Dublin, and to organize a general strike throughout Britain. Smilie, the Chairman of the Miners' Union, stated that the Dublin methods would compel all British workers to resort to revolution and that they would be able to learn the use of arms.

The masses of the British workers are slowly but surely taking a new path—they are abandoning the defence of the petty privileges of the labour aristocracy for their own great heroic struggle for a new system of society. And along this path the British proletariat, bearing in mind their energy and organization, will bring socialism about more quickly and securely than anywhere else.

Severnaya Pravda, No. 23, August 29 (September 11), 1913;
Nash Put, No. 5, August 30 (September 12), 1913.

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* The Irish Nationalists are already expressing the fear that Larkin will organize an independent Irish Workers' Party, which will have to be reckoned with in the first Irish National Parliament.

A WEEK AFTER THE DUBLIN ATROCITIES

On Sunday, September 7, exactly a week after the police atrocities, the Dublin workers organized a huge meeting to protest against the conduct of the Irish capitalists and the Irish police.

The meeting took place in the same street (O'Connell Street) and at the same spot where the meeting banned by the police was to have taken place the previous Sunday. It is a historic spot, where it is most convenient to organize meetings and where they are most frequently held in Dublin.

The police kept out of sight. The streets were filled with workers. There were crowds of people, but complete order prevailed. "Last Sunday," exclaimed an Irish speaker, "the police truncheon reigned here without reason; today reason reigns without the police truncheon."

Britain has a constitution—and for the second time the authorities did not dare to bring their drunken police soldiers into action. Three platforms were put up and six speakers, including representatives of the British proletariat, condemned the crime perpetrated against the people, called upon the workers to display international solidarity, to wage a common struggle.

A resolution was unanimously adopted demanding the right of assembly and the right to organize, and calling for an immediate investigation—under the direction of independent persons and with a guarantee of publicity for all the proceedings—of the conduct of the police the previous Sunday.

In London a magnificent meeting was held in Trafalgar Square. Groups of Socialists and other workers came with their banners. There were many posters with cartoons and slogans on topical events. The crowd particularly applauded a poster depicting a policeman waving a red flag with the inscription, "Silence!"

The outstanding speeches were made by Ben Tillett, who showed that the "Liberal" government of Britain is no better than a reactionary one, and Partridge, Dublin Secretary of the Engineers' Union, who described in detail the shameless acts of police violence in Dublin.

It is instructive to note that the principal slogan at the London and Dublin meetings was the demand for the right to organize. This is quite understandable. Britain has the foundations of political liberty, has a constitutional regime, generally speaking. The right to organize demanded by the workers is one of the reforms absolutely necessary and quite

achievable under the present constitutional regime (just as achievable, as, say, the partial reform of workers' insurance in Russia).

The right to organize is equally indispensable to the workers of Britain and of Russia. And the British workers quite rightly advance this slogan of a political reform essential to them, perfectly well aware of the path to be followed for its achievement and of its complete feasibility under the British Constitution (just as the Russian workers would be right in advancing the partial demand for amendments to the Insurance Act).

In Russia, however, precisely those general foundations of political liberty are absent **without** which the demand for the right to organize is simply ridiculous and is merely a current liberal phrase designed to deceive the people by suggesting that the path of reform is possible in our country. In Russia the fight for the right to organize—a right most urgently needed by both the workers and the entire people—cannot be conducted **without** contrasting the impotent and false reformism of the Liberals to the consistent democracy of the workers, who are innocent of reformist illusions.

Severnaya Pravda, No. 27, September 3 (16), 1913; *Nash Put*, No. 8, September 3 (16), 1913

Vol. 19, pp. 312-13

THE BRITISH LIBERALS AND IRELAND

What is now taking place in the British Parliament in connection with the Bill on Irish Home Rule (self-government, or, more exactly, autonomy for Ireland) is a matter of outstanding interest from the standpoint of both class relationships and the elucidation of the national and agrarian problems.

For centuries Britain has enslaved Ireland, doomed the Irish peasants to unparalleled suffering and gradual extinction from starvation, driven them from the land and compelled them to leave their native country in hundreds of thousands and millions and emigrate to America. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Ireland had a population of $5\frac{1}{2}$ millions; now the population is only $4\frac{1}{2}$ millions. Ireland has become depopulated. During the nineteenth century, more than 5 million Irish settled in America, and there are now more Irishmen in the United States than in Ireland!

The unparalleled destitution and suffering of the Irish peasantry are an instructive example of the lengths to which the landlords and the Liberal bourgeoisie of a "dominant" nation will go. Britain largely based her "brilliant" economic development, the "prosperity" of her industry and commerce on such exploits among the Irish peasantry as recall those of the Russian feudal landlady, Saltychikha.

While Britain "flourished", Ireland moved towards extinction and remained an undeveloped, half-wild, purely agrarian country, a land of poverty-stricken tenant farmers. But however much the "enlightened and Liberal" bourgeoisie of Britain desired to perpetuate the enslavement of Ireland and her poverty, reform inevitably approached, the more so that the revolutionary outbursts of the Irish people in their struggle for liberty and land became more and more ominous. In 1861 there was formed the Irish revolutionary organization of **Fenians**. The Irish who settled in America rendered it every assistance.

The year 1868, with the formation of the government of Gladstone, hero of the Liberal bourgeoisie and the dull philistines, ushered in the **era of reform** in Ireland, an era which has dragged on very nicely to the present day, i.e., little short of half a century. Oh, the wise statesmen of the Liberal bourgeoisie are very well able to "hasten slowly" in the matter of reform!

Karl Marx, who then had already lived in London for more than fifteen years, watched the struggle of the Irish with great interest and sympathy. On November 2, 1867, he wrote to Frederick Engels: "I have done my best to bring about this demonstration of the English workers in favour of Fenianism . . . I used to think the separation of Ireland from England impossible. I now think it inevitable, although after the separation there may come **federation** . . ." In a letter dated November 30th of the same year, Marx, reverting to the same subject, wrote: "The question now is, what shall we advise the English workers? In my opinion they must make the repeal of the Union" (the abolition of the union with Ireland) "(in short, the affair of 1783, only democratized and adapted to the conditions of the time) an article of their **pronunziamento**. This is the only legal and therefore only possible form of Irish emancipation which can be admitted in the programme of an **English** (workers') party." And Marx went on to show that the Irish stood in need of Home Rule and independence from Britain, of an agrarian revolution and of tariffs against Britain.

Such was the programme that Marx suggested to the British workers in the interests of Irish freedom, of accelerating social

development and the freedom of the British workers; because the British workers could not become free so long as they helped (or even allowed) the keeping of another nation in slavery.

But alas! The British workers, owing to a number of special historical causes, proved in the last third of the nineteenth century to be dependent upon the Liberals, to be imbued with the spirit of Liberal Labour policy. They proved to be not at the head of nations and classes fighting for liberty, but at the tail of the contemptible lackeys of the money-bags, Messrs. the British Liberals.

And the Liberals have dragged out for **half a century** the liberation of Ireland, which is not complete even to this day! It is only in the twentieth century that the Irish peasant has begun to turn from a tenant farmer into a free owner of land, but Messrs. the Liberals have saddled him with the system of **buying out the land at a "fair" price!** He has paid, and will continue to pay for many years, millions upon millions to the British landlords as a reward for having plundered him for centuries and reduced him to permanent starvation. The British Liberal bourgeoisie have compelled the Irish peasants to thank the landlords for this in hard cash . . .

Now a Home Rule Bill for Ireland is under consideration in Parliament. But in the North of Ireland there is a province called Ulster (sometimes wrongly spelt in Russian) which is inhabited partly by people of English stock, Protestants, as distinct from the Catholic Irishmen. Well then, the British Conservatives, led by that Black-Hundred landlord, Purishkevich—that is to say, Carson, have raised a frightful howl against Irish autonomy. That means, they say, subjecting Ulsterites to alien people of alien faith! Lord Carson has threatened rebellion, and has organized armed Black-Hundred gangs for this purpose.

This is an empty threat, of course. There can be no question of a rebellion by a handful of hooligans. Nor could there be any question of an Irish Parliament (whose power is determined by **British law**) "oppressing" the Protestants.

The point is simply that the Black-Hundred landlords are trying to **frighten** the Liberals.

And the Liberals are quaking, bowing to the Black Hundreds, making concessions to them, offering to **take a referendum** in Ulster and to postpone the application of the reform to Ulster for six years!

The haggling between the Liberals and the Black Hundreds continues. The reform can wait: the Irish have waited half

a century; they can wait a little longer; after all, one mustn't "offend" the landlords!

Of course, if the Liberals appealed to the people of Britain, to the proletariat, Carson's Black-Hundred gangs would melt away immediately and disappear. The peaceful and full achievement of freedom by Ireland would be guaranteed.

But is it conceivable that the Liberal bourgeoisie will turn to the proletariat for aid against the landlords? Why, the Liberals in Britain are also lackeys of the money-bags, capable only of cringing to the Carsons.

Put Pravdy, No. 34.
March 12, 1914

Vol. 20, pp. 130-33

CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS IN BRITAIN

In No. 34 of *Put Pravdy*, when describing the interesting events in Ireland, we referred to the policy of the British Liberals, who allowed themselves to be scared by the Conservatives.

Since those lines were written new events have occurred, which have transformed that particular conflict (between the Liberals and Conservatives) over the question of Home Rule for Ireland into a general constitutional crisis in Britain.

As the Conservatives threatened a Protestant "rebellion" in Ulster against Home Rule (autonomy, self-government) for Ireland, the Liberal government set part of its troops into motion in order to compel respect for the will of Parliament.

And what happened?

Generals and the other British Army officers mutinied!

They declared that they would not fight against Protestant Ulster, that that would run counter to their "patriotism," and that they would resign.

The Liberal government was absolutely stunned by this revolt of the landlords, who are at the head of the army. The Liberals are accustomed to console themselves with constitutional illusions and phrases about the rule of law, and close their eyes to the real relation of forces, to the class struggle. And this real relation of forces has been and remains such that, owing to the cowardice of the bourgeoisie, a number of pre-bourgeois, mediaeval institutions and privileges of Messrs. the landlords have been preserved.

To suppress the revolt of the aristocratic officers, the Liberal government should have appealed to the people, to the

masses, to the proletariat, but this is exactly what the "enlightened" Liberal bourgeois gentlemen feared more than anything else. And the government **actually made concessions** to the mutinous officers, persuaded them to withdraw their resignations, and gave them **written assurances** that troops would not be used against Ulster.

Efforts were made to conceal from the people the disgraceful fact that such written assurances had been given (March 21), and the Liberal leaders, Asquith, Morley and others, lied in the most incredible and shameless manner in their official statements. However, the truth came out. The fact that written promises were given to the officers has not been refuted. Apparently, "pressure" was brought to bear by the King. The resignation of War Minister Seely, the assumption of his portfolio by Asquith "himself," the re-election of Asquith, the circular to the troops about respect for the law—all this was nothing but sheer official hypocrisy. The fact remains that the Liberals yielded to the landlords, who had torn up the Constitution.

Tempestuous scenes ensued in the British Parliament. The Conservatives heaped well-deserved ridicule and scorn upon the Liberal government, while the Labour M.P., Ramsay MacDonald, one of the most moderate of the Liberal Labour politicians, protested in the strongest terms against the conduct of the reactionaries. He said that these people were always ready to howl against strikers; but when it was a matter of Ulster, they refused to fulfil their duty because the Irish Home Rule Bill affected their class prejudices and interests. (The landlords in Ireland are British, and Home Rule for Ireland, which would mean Home Rule for the Irish bourgeoisie and peasants, threatens to curtail somewhat the voracious appetites of the noble lords.) Ramsay MacDonald continued that these people thought only of fighting the workers, but when it was a matter of compelling the rich and the property owners to respect the law, they refused to do their duty.

The significance of this landlords' revolt against the British Parliament, the "all-powerful" Parliament (as the Liberal blockheads, especially the Liberal pundits, have thought and said millions of times), is extraordinarily great. March 21, 1914, will be an epoch-making turning point, the day when the noble landlords of Britain smashed the British Constitution and British law to bits and gave an excellent lesson in class struggle.

This lesson was a result of the impossibility of blunting the acuteness of the antagonisms between the British proletariat and bourgeoisie by means of the half-hearted, hypocritical, sham-

reformist policy of the Liberals. This lesson will not be lost upon the British labour movement; the working class will now quickly proceed to shake off its philistine faith in the scrap of paper, called the British law and Constitution, which the British aristocrats have torn up before the eyes of the whole people.

These aristocrats behaved like revolutionaries of the Right and thereby shattered all conventionalities, all veneers that prevented the people from seeing the unpleasant but undoubtedly real class struggle. Everybody saw what was hypocritically concealed by the bourgeoisie and the Liberals (they are hypocritical everywhere, but it is doubtful whether their hypocrisy assumes such proportions anywhere as in Britain). Everybody saw that the conspiracy to break the will of Parliament had been prepared long ago. Real class rule lay and still lies **outside** of Parliament. The above-mentioned mediaeval institutions, which for long had been inactive (or rather seemed to be inactive), quickly came into action and proved to be **stronger** than Parliament. And Britain's petty-bourgeois Liberals, with their speeches about reforms and the might of Parliament that lull the workers, proved in fact to be frauds, straw men put up to bamboozle the people. They were quickly "**shut up**" by the aristocracy, who held **power**.

How many books have been written, especially by German and Russian Liberals, in praise of law and social peace in Britain! Everybody knows that the historical mission of the German and Russian Liberals is to cringe like lackeys to what the class struggle has yielded in Britain and in France, and to proclaim the results of that struggle as the "truths of science," a science "**above classes**." In reality, however, "law and social peace" in Britain were merely the brief result of the slumber of the British proletariat approximately between the 1850's and 1900's.

An end has come to the British monopoly. World competition has intensified. The cost of living has gone up. Associations of big capitalists have crushed the small and middle business men and hurled their full weight against the workers. The British proletariat, who fell into slumber after the period of the end of the eighteenth century, after the Chartist movement of the 1830's and 1840's, have awakened once again.

The Constitutional crisis of 1914 will be an important stage in the history of this awakening.

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THE UTOPIAN KARL MARX AND THE PRACTICAL ROSA LUXEMBURG*

While declaring the independence of Poland to be a "utopia" and repeating it ad nauseam, Rosa Luxemburg exclaims ironically: why not raise the demand for the independence of Ireland?

Evidently, the "practical" Rosa Luxemburg is unaware of Karl Marx's attitude to the question of Ireland's independence. It is worth while dwelling upon this, in order to show how a **concrete** demand for national independence is analysed from a really Marxist and not an opportunist standpoint.

It was Marx's custom to "probe the teeth," as he expressed it, of his socialist acquaintances, testing their intelligence and the strength of their convictions. Having made the acquaintance of Lopatin, Marx wrote to Engels on July 5, 1870, expressing a highly flattering opinion of the young Russian Socialist, but adding at the same time:

"... **Poland** is his weak point. On this point he speaks quite like an Englishman—say, an English Chartist of the old school—about Ireland."

Marx questions a Socialist belonging to an oppressing nation about his attitude to an oppressed nation and at once reveals a defect **common** to the Socialists of the dominant nations (British and Russian): failure to understand their socialist duties towards the downtrodden nations, their echoing of the prejudices acquired from the "dominant-nation" bourgeoisie.

Before passing on to Marx's positive declaration on Ireland, we must make the reservation that to the national problem in general the attitude of Marx and Engels was a strictly critical one; they recognized its historically relative importance. Thus, Engels wrote to Marx on May 23, 1851, that the study of history was leading him to pessimistic conclusions concerning Poland, that the importance of Poland was temporary—only until the agrarian revolution took place in Russia. The role of the Poles in history was one of "brave stupidity." "And one cannot point to a single instance in which Poland represented progress successfully, even if only in relation to Russia, or did anything at all of historic importance." Russia has more elements of civilization, education, industry and of the bourgeoisie than the "Poles whose whole nature is that of the idle cavalier."

"What are Warsaw and Cracow compared to Petersburg, Moscow, Odessa!" Engels had no faith in the success of an insurrection of the Polish nobility.

But all these thoughts, so full of genius and penetration, by no means prevented Engels and Marx twelve years later, when Russia was still dormant and Poland was seething, from treating the Polish movement with the most profound and ardent sympathy.

When drafting the Address of the International in 1864, Marx wrote to Engels (on November 4, 1864) that he had to combat Mazzini's nationalism, and went on to say: "Inasmuch as international politics occurred in the Address, I spoke of countries, not of nationalities, and denounced Russia, not the **minores gentium**."** Marx had no doubt about the subordinate significance of the national problem as compared with the "labour problem." But his theory is as far from ignoring national movements as heaven from earth.

1866 arrives. Marx writes to Engels about the "Proudhonist clique" in Paris which "declares nationalities to be an absurdity, attacks Bismarck and Garibaldi, etc. As polemics against chauvinism their doings are useful and explicable. But as believers in Proudhon (Lafargue and Longuet, two very good friends of mine here, also belong to them), who think all Europe must and will sit quietly on their hindquarters until the gentlemen in France abolish 'poverty and ignorance' . . . they are grotesque" (letter of June 7, 1866).

"Yesterday," Marx writes on June 20, 1866, "there was a discussion in the International Council on the present war . . . The discussion wound up, as was to be foreseen, 'with the question of nationality' in general and the attitude we take towards it . . . The (**non-worker**) representatives of 'Young-France' came out with the announcement that all nationalities and even nations were 'antiquated prejudices.' Proudhonized Stirnerism . . . The whole world waits until the French are ripe for a social revolution. . . . The English laughed very much when I began my speech by saying that our friend Lafargue and others, who had done away with nationalities, had spoken 'French' to us, i.e., a language which nine-tenths of the audience did not understand. I also suggested that by the negation of nationalities he appeared, quite unconsciously, to understand their absorption by the model French nation".

The conclusion that follows from all these critical words of Marx is clear: the working class should be the last to make

* This is § 8 of V. I. Lenin's *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination*.—Ed.

* The lesser nations.—Ed.

a fetish of the national problem, since the development of capitalism does not necessarily awaken all nations to independent life. But to brush aside mass national movements once they have started, and to refuse to support what is progressive in them means, in effect, pandering to **nationalistic** prejudices, viz., recognizing "one's own" as the "model nation" (or, let us add, as the nation possessing the exclusive privilege of forming a state).*

But let us return to the problem of Ireland.

Marx's position on this problem is most clearly expressed in the following extracts from his letters :

"I have done my best to bring about this demonstration of the British workers in favour of Fenianism . . . I used to think the separation of Ireland from England impossible, I now think it inevitable, although after the separation there may come federation." This is what Marx wrote to Engels on November 2, 1867.

In his letter of November 30 of the same year he added :

" . . . What shall we advise the **English** workers? In my opinion they must make the repeal of the Union" (of Ireland with Britain, i.e., the separation of Ireland from Britain) "(in short, the affair of 1783, only democratized and adapted to the conditions of the time) an article of their **pronunziamento**. This is the only legal and therefore only possible form of Irish emancipation which can be admitted in the programme of an **English** party. Experience must show later whether a mere personal union can continue to subsist between the two countries. . . .

" . . . What the Irish need is :

"(1) Self-government and independence from England.

"(2) An agrarian revolution . . ."

Marx attached tremendous importance to the question of Ireland and delivered lectures of one and a half hour's duration at the German Workers' Union on this subject (letter of December 17, 1867).

Engels notes in a letter of November 20, 1868, "the hatred for the Irish among the English workers," and almost a year later (October 24, 1869), returning to this subject he writes :

"Il n'y a qu'un pas" (it is only one step) "from Ireland to Russia . . . Irish history shows one what a misfortune it is for

a nation to have subjugated another nation. All the abominations of the English have their origin in the Irish Pale. I have still to plough my way through the Cromwellian period, but this much seems certain to me, that things would have taken another turn in England, too, but for the necessity of military rule in Ireland and the creation of a new aristocracy there."

Let us note, in passing, Marx's letter to Engels of August 18, 1869 :

"In Posnan the Polish workers have brought a strike to a victorious end by the help of their colleagues in Berlin. This struggle against Monsieur le Capital—even in the subordinate form of the strike—is a more serious way of getting rid of national prejudices than that of the bourgeois gentlemen with their peace declamations."

The policy on the Irish question pursued by Marx in the International may be seen from the following :

On November 18, 1869, Marx writes to Engels that he spoke for an hour and a quarter in the Council of the International about the attitude of the British Ministry to the Irish amnesty and proposed the following resolution:

"Resolved,

"that in his reply to the Irish demands for the release of the imprisoned Irish patriots . . . Mr. Gladstone deliberately insults the Irish nation;

"that he clogs political amnesty with conditions alike degrading to the victims of misgovernment and the people they belong to;

"that having, in the teeth of his responsible position, publicly and enthusiastically cheered on the American slave-holders' rebellion, he now steps in to preach to the Irish people the doctrine of passive obedience;

"that his whole proceedings with reference to the Irish amnesty question are the true and genuine offspring of that '**policy of conquest**' by the fiery denunciation of which Mr. Gladstone ousted his Tory rivals from office;

"that the General Council of the International Working Men's Association express their admiration of the spirited, firm and high-souled manner in which the Irish people carry on their amnesty movement;

"that these resolutions be communicated to all branches of, and working men's bodies connected with, the International Working Men's Association in Europe and America."

On December 10, 1869, Marx writes that his paper on the Irish question to be read at the Council of the International will be framed on the following lines :

* Cf. also Marx's letter to Engels of June 3, 1867: " . . . I have learned with real pleasure from the report of the *Times* Paris correspondent about the pro-Polish exclamations of the Parisians against Russia . . . M. Proudhon and his little doctrinaire clique are not the French people."

"... Quite apart from all phrases about 'international' and 'humane' justice for Ireland—which are taken for granted in the International Council—it is in the direct and absolute interest of the English working class to get rid of their present connection with Ireland. And this is my fullest conviction, and for reasons which in part I can not tell the English workers themselves. For a long time I believed that it would be possible to overthrow the Irish regime by English working-class ascendancy. I always expressed this point of view in the "New York Tribune" (an American paper to which Marx contributed for a long time). "Deeper study has now convinced me of the opposite. The English working class will never accomplish anything until it has got rid of Ireland. . . . English reaction in England had its roots . . . in the subjugation of Ireland" (Marx's emphasis).

Marx's policy on the Irish question should now be quite clear to readers.

The "utopian" Marx was so "impractical" that he stood for the separation of Ireland, which has not been realized even half a century later.

What gave rise to Marx's policy, and was it not a mistake?

At first Marx thought that Ireland would be liberated not by the national movement of the oppressed nation, but by the working-class movement of the oppressing nation. Marx did not make an absolute point of the national movement, knowing, as he did, that only the victory of the working class can bring about the complete liberation of all nationalities. It is impossible to estimate in advance all the possible correlations between the bourgeois liberation movements of the oppressed nations and the proletarian emancipation movement of the oppressing nation (the very problem which today makes the national question in Russia so difficult).

However, it turned out that the British working class fell under the influence of the Liberals for quite a long time, became an appendage of theirs and by adopting a Liberal Labour policy rendered itself impotent. The bourgeois liberation movement in Ireland grew stronger and assumed revolutionary forms. Marx reconsidered his view and corrected it. "How disastrous it is for a nation when it has subjugated another nation." The British working class will never be free until Ireland is freed from the British yoke. Reaction in Britain is strengthened and fostered by the enslavement of Ireland (just as reaction in Russia is fostered by her enslavement of a number of nations!).

And Marx, in proposing in the International a resolution of sympathy with the "Irish nation," the "Irish people" (the clever L. VI. would probably have berated poor Marx for forgetting about the class struggle!), advocates the secession of Ireland from England, "although after the separation there may come federation."

What were the theoretical grounds for this conclusion of Marx's? In Britain the bourgeois revolution had been consummated long ago. But it had not yet been so in Ireland; it is being consummated only now, after the lapse of half a century, by the reforms of the British Liberals. If capitalism had been overthrown in Britain as quickly as Marx at first expected there would have been no room for a bourgeois-democratic and general national movement in Ireland. But since it had arisen, Marx advised the British workers to support it, to give it a revolutionary impetus and lead it to completion in the interests of their own liberty.

The economic ties between Ireland and Britain in the 1860's were, of course, even closer than Russia's ties with Poland, the Ukraine, etc. The "impracticability" and "impossibility" of the secession of Ireland (if only owing to geographical conditions and Britain's immense colonial power) were quite obvious. While in principle an enemy of federalism, Marx in this instance admits also of federation,* so long as the emancipation of Ireland is achieved in a revolutionary and not in a reformist way, through the movement of the masses of the Irish people supported by the British working class. There can be no doubt that only such a solution of the historical problem would most benefit the interests of the proletariat and rapid social development.

Things turned out differently. Both the Irish people and the British proletariat proved to be weak. Only now, through the miserable deals between the British Liberals and the Irish

* By the way, it is not difficult to see why, from a Social-Democratic point of view, the right of nations to "self-determination" must not be understood as either federation or autonomy (although, speaking in the abstract, both come under the category of "self-determination"). The right to federation is, in general, an absurdity, since federation is a bilateral contract. It goes without saying that Marxists cannot place the defence of federalism in general in their programme. As to autonomy, Marxists defend "not the right to" autonomy but autonomy itself, as a general, universal principle of a democratic state with a heterogeneous national composition, with sharp differences in geographical and other conditions. Consequently, the recognition of the "right of nations to autonomy" is as absurd as the "right of nations to federation."

bourgeoisie, is the Irish problem **being solved** (the example of Ulster shows with what difficulty) through the land reform (with compensation) and autonomy (not introduced so far). Well then? Does it follow that Marx and Engels were "Utopians," that they advanced "impossible" national demands, that they allowed themselves to be influenced by the Irish petty-bourgeois nationalists (there is no doubt about the petty-bourgeois nature of the Fenian movement), etc.?

No. In the Irish question, too, Marx and Engels pursued a consistently proletarian policy, which really educated the masses in the spirit of democracy and socialism. Only such a policy could have saved both Ireland and Britain from half a century of delay in the introduction of the necessary reforms, and could have prevented these reforms from being mutilated by the Liberals to please the reactionaries.

The policy of Marx and Engels in the Irish question serves as a splendid example, which is of immense **practical** importance to this day, of the attitude the proletariat of the oppressing nations should adopt towards national movements. It serves as a warning against that "servile haste" with which the philistines of all countries, colours and languages hurry to declare as "utopian" the idea of changing the frontiers of states that have been established by the violence and privileges of the landlords and bourgeoisie of one nation.

Should the Irish and British proletariat not accept Marx's policy and make the secession of Ireland their slogan, that would be the worst sort of opportunism, neglect of their duties as democrats and Socialists, and yielding to **British** reaction and the **British** bourgeoisie.

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THE REVOLUTIONARY PROLETARIAT AND THE RIGHT OF NATIONS TO SELF-DETERMINATION

The Zimmerwald Manifesto, like the majority of the programmes or the tactical resolutions of the Social-Democratic parties, proclaims the "right of nations to self-determination." Parabellum, in Nos. 252 and 253 of the **Berner Tagwacht**, declares the "struggle for the non-existent right to self-determination" to be "illusory"; he **counters** to it the "revolutionary mass struggle of the proletariat against capitalism,"

while at the same time **assuring** us that "we are against annexations" (this assurance is repeated **five** times in Parabellum's article), and against all violence to nations.

The arguments advanced by Parabellum in support of his position boil down to the assertion that now all national problems, like those of Alsace-Lorraine, Armenia, etc., are problems of imperialism; that capital has outgrown the framework of national states—that it is impossible "to turn back the wheel of history" to the obsolete ideal of national states, etc.

Let us see whether Parabellum's arguments are correct.

First of all, it is Parabellum who is looking backward and not forward when, entering into battle against working class acceptance "of the ideal of the national state," he directs his glance towards Britain, France, Italy, Germany, i.e., towards countries where the national movement for liberation is a thing of the past, and not towards the East, towards Asia, Africa, the colonies, where this movement is a thing of the present and the future. Suffice it to mention India, China, Persia, Egypt.

Further: imperialism means that capital has outgrown the framework of national states, it means that national oppression has been extended and accentuated on a new historical basis. Hence, what follows is that, Parabellum notwithstanding, we must **connect** the revolutionary struggle for socialism with a revolutionary programme on the national question.

From what Parabellum says it appears that **in the name** of the socialist revolution he scornfully rejects a consistently revolutionary programme in the sphere of democracy. That is wrong. The proletariat cannot be victorious except through democracy, i.e., by giving full effect to democracy and by combining every step of its struggle with democratic demands formulated in most resolute terms. It is absurd to **counter** the socialist revolution and the revolutionary struggle against capitalism to **one** of the questions of democracy, in this case, the national question. We must **combine** the revolutionary struggle against capitalism with a revolutionary programme and tactics as regards **all** democratic demands: a republic, a militia, popular election of officials, equal rights for women, self-determination of nations, etc. While capitalism exists, these demands, all of them, can only be achieved as an exception, and even then in an incomplete, distorted form. Basing ourselves on the democracy already achieved, exposing its incompleteness under capitalism, we demand the overthrow of capitalism, the expropriation of the bourgeoisie, as a necessary basis both for the abolition of the poverty of the masses and for the **complete** and **all-round** introduction of **all** democratic reforms. Some of these reforms

will be started before the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, others **in the course** of this overthrow, and still others after it. The social revolution is not a single battle, but an epoch covering a whole number of battles over all sorts of problems of economic and democratic reform, which are consummated only by the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. It is for the sake of this final aim that we must formulate **every one** of our democratic demands in a consistently revolutionary way. It is quite conceivable that the workers of some particular country will overthrow the bourgeoisie **before** even a single fundamental democratic reform has been fully achieved. It is quite inconceivable, however, that the proletariat, as a historical class, will be able to defeat the bourgeoisie if it is not made ready for this by being educated in the spirit of the most consistent and resolutely revolutionary democracy.

Imperialism is the progressively growing oppression of the nations of the world by a handful of Great Powers; it is the epoch of wars among the latter to extend and consolidate the oppression of nations; it is the epoch in which the masses of the people are deceived by hypocritical social-patriots, i.e., individuals who **under the pretext** of "freedom of nations," "right of nations to self-determination," and "defence of the fatherland," justify and defend the oppression of the majority of the world's nations by the Great Powers.

That is why the central point of the Social-Democratic programme must be precisely that division of nations into oppressing and oppressed which is the **essence** of imperialism, and which is **falsely** evaded by the social-chauvinists and Kautsky. This division is not important from the viewpoint of bourgeois pacifism or of the philistine utopia of peaceful competition among independent nations under capitalism, but it is most important from the viewpoint of the revolutionary struggle against imperialism. And from this division must follow **our** definition of the "right of nations to self-determination," a definition that is consistently democratic, revolutionary, and **in accord** with the general task of the immediate struggle for socialism. It is on behalf of this right, and fighting for its sincere recognition, that the Social-Democrats of the oppressing nations must demand the freedom of the oppressed nations to secede, for otherwise recognition of equal rights for nations and of international working-class solidarity would in fact be mere empty phrase-mongering, mere hypocrisy. The Social-Democrats of the oppressed nations, on the other hand, must place in the forefront the unity and the merging of the workers of the oppressed nations with those of the oppressing nations, for

otherwise these Social-Democrats will involuntarily become the allies of this or that national **bourgeoisie**, who **always** betray the interests of the people and of democracy, and are **always** ready in their turn to annex territory and to oppress other nations.

The manner in which the national question was presented at the end of the sixties of the past century may serve as an instructive example. The petty-bourgeois democrats, to whom all thought of the class struggle and of the socialist revolution was totally alien, pictured to themselves a utopia of peaceful competition among free and equal nations under capitalism. The Proudhonists utterly "denied" the national question and the right of nations to self-determination, from the viewpoint of the immediate tasks of the social revolution. Marx ridiculed French Proudhonism and showed its affinity to French chauvinism ("... all Europe must and will sit quietly on their hindquarters until the gentlemen in France abolish 'poverty ...'" "By the negation of nationalities they appeared, quite unconsciously, to understand their absorption into the model French nation."). Marx demanded the **separation of Ireland** from Britain "although after the separation there may come federation," and he demanded it not from the standpoint of the petty-bourgeois utopia of a peaceful capitalism, not from considerations of "justice for Ireland," but from the standpoint of the interests of the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat of the **oppressing, i.e., British nation** against capitalism. The freedom of **that** nation was cramped and mutilated by the fact that it oppressed another nation. The inter-nationalism of the **British** proletariat would remain a hypocritical phrase if **they** did not demand the separation of Ireland. Although Marx never favoured small states, splitting up states at all, or the principle of federation, he considered the separation of an oppressed nation to be a step towards federation, and consequently, not towards splitting up, but towards concentration, both political and economic, but concentration on the basis of democracy. From Parabellum's standpoint, Marx very likely fought an "illusory struggle" when he demanded the separation of Ireland. Actually, however, this demand **alone** represented a consistent revolutionary programme, it alone corresponded to internationalism, it alone advocated concentration along **non-imperialist** lines.

The imperialism of our days has led to a situation where the oppression of nations by the Great Powers has become general. The standpoint that a fight must be conducted against the social-chauvinism of the dominant nations, now waging an imperialist war to increase the oppression of nations, and op-

pressing the majority of the world's nations and the majority of the earth's population—it is this standpoint that must be decisive, cardinal and basic in the national programme of Social-Democracy.

Take a glance at the present trends of Social-Democratic thought on this subject. The petty-bourgeois utopians who dreamt of equality and peace among nations under capitalism have given way to the social-imperialists. In fighting against the former, Parabellum is tilting at windmills and involuntarily playing into the hands of the latter. What is the programme of the social-chauvinists on the national question?

They either entirely deny the right to self-determination, using arguments like those advanced by Parabellum (Cunow, Pavus, the Russian opportunists Semkovsky, Liebman, and others), or they recognize that right in an obviously hypocritical fashion, namely, without applying it to precisely those nations which are oppressed by their own nation or by the military allies of their own nation (Plekhanov, Hyndman, all the pro-French patriots, then Scheidemann, etc., etc.). The formulation of the social chauvinist lie that is most plausible and therefore most dangerous to the proletariat is the one given by Kautsky. In words, he is for self-determination of nations; in words, he is for the Social-Democratic Party **“die Selbständigkeit der Nationen allseitig (!) und rückhaltlos (??) achtet und fordert.”*** (Neue Zeit, No. 33, II, p. 241, May 21, 1915.) In deeds, however, he adapts the national programme to the prevailing social-chauvenism, distorts and cuts it down, gives no exact definition of the duties of the Socialists of the oppressing nations, and even plainly falsifies the democratic principle itself when he says that to demand “state independence” (**“staatliche Selbständigkeit”**) for every nation would mean demanding “too much” (**“zu viel,”** Neue Zeit, No. 33, II, p. 77, April 16, 1915). “National autonomy,” if you please, is enough!! The principal question, the very one that the imperialist bourgeoisie will not permit to be discussed, namely, the question of the **frontiers of a state** based upon the oppression of nations, is avoided by Kautsky, who, to please that bourgeoisie throws the most essential thing out of the programme. The bourgeoisie are ready to promise any “national equality,” “national autonomy” you please, so long as the proletariat remains within the framework of legality and “peacefully” submits to them on the question

of the state **frontiers!** Kautsky formulates the national programme of Social-Democracy in a reformist and not a revolutionary manner.

Parabellum's national programme, or more correctly his **assurances** that “we are against annexations,” has the whole-hearted endorsement of the Parteivorstand,* Kautsky, Plekhanov and Co., precisely because that programme does not expose the predominant social-patriots. Bourgeois pacifists would also endorse that programme. Parabellum's splendid **general programme** (“revolutionary mass struggle against capitalism”) serves him, as the Proudhonists of the sixties, not to draw up in conformity with it, in its spirit, a programme on the national question that is uncompromising and equally revolutionary, but to clear the field here for the social-patriots. In our imperialist epoch the majority of the Socialists in the world belong to nations that oppress other nations and strive to extend this oppression. That is why our “struggle against annexations” will be meaningless and will not scare the social-patriots in the least, if we do not declare that the Socialist of an oppressing nation who does not conduct propaganda, both in peacetime and wartime, in favour of freedom of secession for the oppressed nations, is no Socialist and no internationalist, but a chauvinist! The Socialist of an oppressing nation who fails to conduct such propaganda in defiance of government prohibition, i.e., in the free, i.e., in the illegal, press is a hypocritical advocate of equal rights for nations!

About Russia, which has not yet completed its bourgeois-democratic revolution, Parabellum writes only **one** sentence :

“Selbst das wirtschaftlich sehr zurückgebliebene Russland hat in der Haltung der Polnischen, Lettischen, Armenischen Bourgeoisie gezeigt, dass nicht nur die militärische Bewachung es ist, die die Völker in diesem ‘Zuchthaus der Völker’ zusammenhält, sondern Bedürfnisse der kapitalistischen Expansion für die das ungeheure Territorium ein glänzender Boden der Entwicklung ist.”**

That is not a “Social-Democratic standpoint” but a liberal-bourgeois one, not an internationalist, but a Great-Russian

* The leadership of the German Social-Democratic Party.—Ed.

** “Even economically very backward Russia proved, in the stand taken by the Polish, Lettish and Armenian bourgeoisie, that it is not only the military guard that keeps the peoples in that ‘prison of peoples’ together, but also the need for capitalist expansion, for which the vast territory is a splendid ground for development.”—Ed.

* “all-sidedly (!) and unreservedly (??) respecting and demanding the independence of nations.”—Ed.

chauvinist standpoint. Parabellum, who fights the German social-patriots so excellently, apparently knows very little about Russian chauvinism. In order to convert Parabellum's sentence into a Social-Democratic postulate and to draw Social-Democratic conclusions from it, it should be changed and supplemented in the following way :

Russia is a prison of peoples not only because of the military-feudal character of tsarism, not only because the Great-Russian bourgeoisie support tsarism, but also because the Polish, etc., bourgeoisie have sacrificed the freedom of nations and democracy in general for the interests of capitalist expansion. The Russian proletariat cannot march at the head of the people towards a victorious democratic revolution (which is its immediate task), or fight alongside its brothers, the proletarians of Europe, for a socialist revolution, without immediately demanding, fully and "rückhaltlos,"* freedom to separate from Russia for all the nations oppressed by tsarism. This we demand, not independently of our revolutionary struggle for socialism, but because this struggle will remain an empty phrase if it is not linked up with a revolutionary approach to all questions of democracy, including the national question. We demand freedom of self-determination, i.e., independence, i.e., freedom of separation for the oppressed nations, not because we have dreamt of splitting up the country economically, or of the ideal of small states, but, on the contrary, because we want large states and the closer unity and even fusion of nations, but on a truly democratic, truly internationalist basis, which is **inconceivable** without freedom to separate. Just as Marx in 1869 demanded the separation of Ireland, not in order to split, but to achieve subsequent free alliance between Ireland and Britain, not in order to secure "justice for Ireland," but in the interests of the revolutionary struggle of the British proletariat, so we consider the refusal of Russian Socialists to demand freedom of self-determination for nations, in the sense we have indicated above, to be a direct betrayal of democracy, internationalism and socialism.

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THE IRISH REBELLION OF 1916 *

Our theses** were written before this rebellion broke out, a rebellion which must serve as material for testing theoretical views.

The views of the opponents of self-determination lead to the conclusion that the vitality of small nations oppressed by imperialism is already sapped, that they can play no role against imperialism, that support of their purely national aspirations will lead to nothing, etc. The imperialist war of 1914-16 has provided **facts** which refute such conclusions.

The war has been an epoch of crisis for the West-European nations, for imperialism as a whole. Every crisis casts off the conventional, tears away outer wrappings, sweeps away the obsolete, reveals the deeper springs and forces. What has it revealed from the standpoint of the movement of oppressed nations? In the colonies there has been a series of attempts at rebellion, which of course the oppressing nations have done all they could to hide by means of the military censorship. Nevertheless, it is known that in Singapore the British brutally suppressed a mutiny among their Indian troops; that there have been attempts at rebellion in French Annam (see *Nashe Slovo*) and in the German Cameroons (see Junius's pamphlet); that in Europe, on the one hand, there has been a rebellion in Ireland, which the "freedom-loving" British, who have not dared to extend conscription to Ireland, suppressed by executions; and, on the other, the Austrian Government condemned deputies of the Czech Diet to death "for treason," and shot entire Czech regiments for the same "crime."

This list is far from complete, of course. Nevertheless, it proves that, in **connection with** the crisis of imperialism the flames of national revolt have burst out **both** in the colonies **and** in Europe, that national sympathies and antipathies have manifested themselves in spite of draconic threats and measures of repression. And yet the crisis of imperialism has far from reached its highest point of development: the power of the imperialist bourgeoisie has not yet been undermined (the war of "exhaustion" may bring that about, but has not done so yet); the proletarian movements in the imperialist countries are still

* This is § 10 of V. I. Lenin's *The Discussion of Self-Determination Summed Up*.—Ed.

** Lenin's "The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination," written early 1916.

* Unreservedly.—Ed.

very feeble. What will happen when the war has led to utter exhaustion, or when in at least one of these countries the blows of proletarian struggle cause bourgeois rule to shake as they shook tsarist rule in 1905?

In the *Berner Tagwacht*, the organ of the Zimmerwaldists, including some Lefts, an article on the Irish rebellion appeared in the issue of May 9, 1916, entitled "A Dead Letter" and signed with the initials K.R. In this article the Irish rebellion was declared to be nothing more nor less than a "putsch," for, the author argues, "the Irish problem was an agrarian problem," the peasants had been appeased by reforms, and the nationalist movement was now a "purely urban, petty-bourgeois movement which, notwithstanding the sensation it caused, had not much social backing."

It is not surprising that this monstrously doctrinaire and pedantic opinion coincides with the opinion of a Russian national-liberal, the Cadet Mr. A. Kulisher (*Rech*, No. 102, April 15, 1916), who also dubbed the rebellion "the Dublin putsch."

It is to be hoped that, in accordance with the adage, "it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good," many comrades who have failed to realize the morass they are sinking into by repudiating "self-determination" and by treating the national movements of small nations with disdain, will have their eyes opened now by the fact of the opinion of a representative of the imperialist bourgeoisie "accidentally" coinciding with that of a Social-Democrat !!

The terms "putsch," in the scientific sense of the word, may be employed only when the attempt at insurrection has revealed nothing but a circle of conspirators or stupid maniacs, and has aroused no sympathy among the masses. The centuries-old Irish national movement, having passed through various stages and combinations of class interests, expressed itself, incidentally, in a mass Irish National Congress in America (*Vorwärts*, March 20, 1916), which called for Irish independence—it expressed itself in street fighting conducted by a section of the urban petty bourgeoisie and a section of the workers after a long period of mass agitation, demonstrations, suppression of the press, etc. Whoever calls such an uprising a "putsch" is either a hardened reactionary, or a doctrinaire hopelessly incapable of picturing a social revolution as a living thing.

For to imagine that social revolution is conceivable without revolts by small nations in the colonies and in Europe, without the revolutionary outbursts of a section of the petty bourgeoisie with all its prejudices, without a movement of politically non-

conscious proletarian and semi-proletarian masses against landlord, church, monarchal, national and other oppression—to imagine that means **repudiating social revolution**. Very likely one army will line up in one place and say, "We are for socialism," while another will do so in another place and say, "We are for imperialism," and that will be the social revolution! Only from such a ridiculously pedantic angle could one label the Irish rebellion a "putsch."

Whoever expects a "pure" social revolution will **never** live to see it. Such a person pays lip service to revolution without understanding what revolution really is.

The Russian Revolution of 1905 was a bourgeois-democratic revolution. It consisted of a series of battles fought by **all** the discontented classes, groups and elements of the population. Among them were masses imbued with the crudest prejudices with the vaguest and most fantastic aims of struggle; there were small groups which accepted Japanese money, there were speculators and adventurers, etc. **Objectively**, the mass movement was shattering tsarism and paving the way for democracy; for that reason the class-conscious workers led it.

The socialist revolution in Europe **cannot be** anything but an outburst of mass struggle by all and sundry oppressed and discontented elements. Sections of the petty bourgeoisie and of the backward workers will inevitably participate in it—without such participation, mass struggle is **not** possible, **no** revolution is possible—and just as inevitably will they bring into the movement their prejudices, their reactionary fantasies, their weaknesses and errors. But **objectively** they will attack **capital**, and the class-conscious vanguard of the revolution, the advanced proletariat, expressing this objective truth of the heterogeneous and discordant, motley and outwardly incohesive mass struggle, will be able to unite and direct it, to capture power, to seize the banks, to expropriate the trusts hated by all (though for different reasons!), and to introduce other dictatorial measures that in their totality constitute the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the victory of socialism, which, however, will by no means immediately "purge" itself of petty-bourgeois slag.

Social-Democracy, we read in the Polish theses (1,4), "must utilize the struggle of the young colonial bourgeoisie against European imperialism **in order to sharpen the revolutionary crisis in Europe**." (Author's heavy print).

Is it not clear that it is least of all permissible to contrast Europe to the colonies in **this** respect? The struggle of the oppressed nations in **Europe**, a struggle capable of going to the length of insurrection and street fighting, of breaking down the

iron discipline in the army and martial law, will "sharpen the revolutionary crisis in Europe" infinitely more than a much more developed rebellion in a remote colony. A blow delivered against British imperialist bourgeois rule by a rebellion in Ireland is of a hundred times greater political significance than a blow of equal weight in Asia or in Africa.

The French chauvinist press recently reported that the 80th issue of an illegal journal, **Free Belgium**, had appeared in Belgium. Of course, the French chauvinist press very often lies, but this piece of news resembles the truth. Whereas the chauvinist and Kautskyist German Social-Democracy has failed to establish a free press for itself during the two years of war, and has servilely borne the yoke of military censorship (only the Left radical elements, be it said to their honour, have published pamphlets and manifestoes in spite of the censorship)—an oppressed civilized nation has replied to a military oppression unparalleled in ferocity by establishing an organ of revolutionary protest! The dialectics of history are such that small nations, powerless as an **independent** factor in the struggle against imperialism, play the part of one of the ferments, one of the bacilli, which help the **real** anti-imperialist force to come on the scene, namely, the socialist proletariat.

The General Staffs in the present war assiduously strive to utilize every national and revolutionary movement in the camp of their enemy: the Germans utilize the Irish rebellion, the French—the Czech movement, etc. From their own standpoint they are acting quite properly. A serious war cannot be treated seriously if advantage is not taken of the slightest weakness of the enemy, if every opportunity is not seized, the more so since it is impossible to know beforehand at what moment, and with what force some powder magazine may "explode" somewhere. We would be very poor revolutionaries if, in the great liberation war of the proletariat for socialism, we did not know how to utilize **every** popular movement against the **various** calamities of imperialism in order to sharpen and extend the crisis. If, on the one hand, we were to declare and to repeat in a thousand keys that we are "opposed" to all national oppression and, on the other hand, we were to describe as a "putsch" the heroic revolt of the most mobile and enlightened section of certain classes in an oppressed nation against its oppressors, we would be sinking to the same stupid level as the Kautskyites.

The misfortune of the Irish is that they have risen prematurely, when the European revolt of the proletariat has **not yet** matured. Capitalism is not so harmoniously built that the various springs of rebellion can of themselves merge at one

effort, without reverses and defeats. On the other hand, the very fact that revolts break out at different times, in different places, and are of different kinds, guarantees wide scope and depth to the general movement; only in premature, partial, scattered and therefore unsuccessful, revolutionary movements do the masses gain experience, acquire knowledge, gather strength, get to know their real leaders, the socialist proletarians, and in this way prepare for a general onslaught, in the same way as separate strikes, demonstrations, local and national, outbreaks in the army, outbursts among the peasantry, etc., prepared the way for the general onslaught in 1905.

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ABOUT THE SLOGAN OF "DISARMAMENT"

(Excerpt)

P.S. On p. 287 of the latest issue of the **British Socialist Review** (September 1916), organ of the opportunist Independent Labour Party, we find a resolution of that Party's Newcastle Conference, declaring its refusal to support **every** war entered into by **any** government even if such war be "nominally" of a "defensive" character. And in an editorial article on p. 205 we meet the following statement: "In no degree do we approve the Sinn Fein rebellion" (the Irish rebellion of 1916). "We do not approve armed rebellion at all, any more than any other form of militarism and war."

Is there any need to show that these "anti-militarists," such supporters of disarmament in a country which is a great, and not a small, power, are the worst opportunists? Yet they are quite right from the theoretical point of view in regarding armed uprising as "one of the forms" of militarism and war.

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Vol. 23, p. 93

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